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54 Therapeutic compositions against streptococcal infections, transformed hosts, methods of immunization and genetically engineered products.

57 Non-virulent bacteria are disclosed into which have been cloned heterologous nucleotide sequences encoded for the expression of Streptococcal M protein antigens, which are effective to elicit opsonic antibodies against Streptococcal infections. These bacteria are useful for vaccination against Streptococcus pyogenes bacteria.

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Description

THERAPEUTIC COMPOSITIONS AGAINST STREPTOCOCCAL INFECTIONS, TRANSFORMED HOSTS, METHODS OF IMMUNIZATION AND GENETICALLY ENGINEERED PRODUCTS

This invention relates to immunization against Streptococcal infections, more particularly against group A streptococcal infections.

The invention has broad and important implications. As far as is known by the inventor, there is provided for the first time a biological living vehicle which carries a protective antigen of a virulent bacteria which antigen is effective to immunize against infections caused by the virulent bacteria. It is contemplated that the embodiments here disclosed are applicable to broader and more far reaching applications, methods and uses.

The search for a safe and effective vaccine against those strains of group A streptococci that trigger rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease has been ongoing for more than sixty years. Lancefield, "Current Knowledge of Type-Specific M Protein Antigens to Group A Streptococci," *J. Immunol.*, Vol. 89, pp. 307 - 313 (1962). It has been reported that few bacterial species have been subjected to more intensive investigation during the century than *Streptococcus pyogenes* or the group A streptococcus. As conviction grew that this organism was first the principal, and then the exclusive agent for acute rheumatic fever, researchers sought with much determination and effort to dissect out the product of the bacterium whose toxic or antigenic components might touch off the rheumatic process. For a thorough study of rheumatic fever and streptococcal infection see Stollerman, *Rheumatic Fever and Streptococcal Infection* (New York Clinical Cardiological Monographs, Grune and Stratton, 1975). The central role of M protein in immunity against group A streptococci has been reviewed by Stollerman. Reference is also made to Beachey and Seyer, "Primary Structure and Immunochemistry of Group A Streptococcal M Proteins," *Seminars in Infectious Disease*, Vol. 4, pp. 401 - 410 (J.B. Robbins, J.C. Hill and J.C. Sadoff, eds., Georg Thieme Verlag, pub., New York and Stuttgart, 1982).

Most efforts to develop a vaccine were frustrated by severe toxic reactions to almost any Streptococcal product introduced into the human host. Some of these products have been shown to give rise to antibodies that cross react with host tissues, especially the heart. Kaplan and Meyerserian, "An Immunological Cross-Reaction Between Group A Streptococcal Cells and Human Heart Tissue," *Lancet*, Vol. i, pp 706 - 710 (1962); Zabriskie and Freimer, "An Immunological Relationship Between the Group A Streptococcus and Mammalian Muscle," *J. Exp. Med.*, Vol. 124, pp. 661 - 678 (1966). Although it has been long established that the M protein on the surface of group A Streptococcus contains the protective antigens of these organisms, the fear has been that the isolated M protein may be associated with potentially harmful tissue cross-reactive antigens that give rise to rather than prevent, rheumatic fever. This fear has been perpetuated by the finding that certain rheumatogenic Streptococci produce M proteins that are closely associated with a heart cross-reactive antigen. Kaplan, "Immunologic Relation of Streptococcal and Tissue Antigens. I. Properties of an Antigen in Certain Strains of Group A Streptococci Exhibiting an Immunologic Cross-Reaction with Human Heart Tissue," *J. Immunol.* Vol. 90, p. 595 (1963). Indeed, recently it has been established that one of the M protein molecules contains, within its covalent structure, an epitope that elicits a protective anti-Streptococcal antibody that also cross-reacts with a sarcolemmal protein of human heart tissue. Dale and Beachey, "Protective Antigenic Determinant of Streptococcal M Protein Shared with Sarcolemmal Membrane Protein of Human Heart," *J. Exp. Med.*, Vol. 156, pp. 1165 - 1176 (1982).

United States Patent No. 4,284,537, to E. Beachey, issued August 18, 1981, disclosed the amino acid sequence of two peptide fragments derived from type 24 M protein. It also disclosed that each of these natural fragments, when covalently linked to a carrier such as a polylysine, was able to elicit type-specific opsonic antibodies effective against *Streptococcus pyogenes*. Each of these fragments was a natural extract, and each contained 35 amino acids.

United States Patent No. 4,454,121, to E. Beachey, issued June 12, 1984, disclosed a synthetic peptide (S-CB7) and that one of the protective determinants is located in a specific fragment of S-CB7 of type 24 M protein which contains only twelve amino acid residues (S-CB7(18-29)). S-CB7, as described, differs from the native CB-7 fragment in that the COOH-terminal residue of S-CB7 is methionine, in contrast to homoserine. The specification also teaches and described covalently linked conjugates of S-CB7 and appropriate hapten carriers, natural, like BSA or OVA or synthetic, like polylysine. Further details about this work have been published in *Nature* on July 30, 1981, by Beachey et al, 292, pages 457 - 459.

United States Patent No. 4,521,334, entitled "Synthetic Polypeptide Fragments," to Edwin H. Beachey issued June 4, 1985, discloses the amino acid sequence of three peptide fragments CB3, CB4 and CB5, and 35 and 37 amino acid sequences of type 24 M which contain antigenic determinants corresponding to the antigenic determinants contained in CB3 - CB7. United States Patent No. 4,597,967 entitled "Synthetic Polypeptide Fragments," to Edwin H. Beachey, issued July 1, 1986, disclosed that these fragments, when covalently linked to a carrier such as polylysine, are able to elicit type-specific opsonic antibodies effective against *Streptococcus pyogenes*.

United States Application Serial No. 739,963 entitled "Biologically Active Hybrid Peptides of Streptococcal M Protein and Compositions and use" to Edwin H. Beachey et al filed May 31, 1985 disclosed peptide sequences containing fragments of M5, M6, and M24 proteins which are able to elicit opsonic and bactericidal antibodies to *Streptococcus pyogenes* which are not serologically cross-reactive with tissue antigens of the human or

host heart. United States Application Serial No. 839,750 entitled "Synthetic M Proteins-Streptococci Type 6" to Edwin H. Beachey, et al filed March 14, 1986 disclosed the synthesis of type M6 protein antigen conjugates. United States Application Serial No. 858,436 entitled "Localization of Protective Epitopes of the Amino Terminus of Type S Streptococcal M Protein," to Edwin H. Beachey, et al filed May 1, 1986 disclosed the synthesis of Type M5 protein antigen conjugates.

The above patents disclose small peptide fragments which are immunogenic and contribute to the development of a safe and effective vaccine against those streptococcal infections that initiate fevers and rheumatic heart disease. The approach was that very small peptides would permit disposal of a large portion of the M protein molecule and therefore, should reduce the chances of eliciting immunological cross-reactions against host tissues. See for instance the above-referred to United States Patent 4,454,121 Columns 1 and 2.

For additional information regarding type specific protective immunity evoked by synthetic peptides of Streptococcus pyogenes M protein, See, Beachey, et al., "Type Specific Protective Immunity Evoked by Synthetic Peptide of Streptococcus pyogenes M Protein," Nature, Vol. 292, No. 5822, pp 457 - 459 (July 30, 1981).

For additional literature in this field See Hasty, et als, "Hybridomas Antibodies Against Protective and Non-Protective Antigenic Determinants of a Structurally Defined Polypeptide Fragment of Streptococcal M Protein," J. Exp. Med. Vol. 155, p 1010 (April 1982) ; and Hopp and Woods, "Prediction of Protein Antigenic Determinants from Amino Acid Sequences," Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, Vol. 78, No. 6, pp. 3824 - 28 (June 1981).

Notwithstanding these advances, there remains a serious need, as yet unfilled for an orally administrable vaccine incorporating these non-cross-reactive immunogenic polypeptides. By administering these peptides in the form of an attenuated non-virulent recombinant bacterium capable of their synthesis, the present invention marks another forward step and provides another advance in the medical sciences, particularly in the control of Streptococcal infections.

Numerous serotypes of M proteins are known, coded on genes that are alleles of each other. Each serotype corresponds to a different strain of S. pyogenes and these serotypes differ only by their amino terminal sequences.

The present invention relates in a general way to a genetic engineering approach to the synthesis of a Streptococcal M protein antigen or antigen fragment which is effective to elicit opsonic antibodies against Streptococcal infections.

In a more specific sense the invention provides a transformed non-virulent bacterium which contains a heterologous nucleotide sequence which nucleotide sequence is encoded for and expresses a Streptococcal M protein antigen.

The invention also provides a transformed non-virulent host in which the expressed Streptococcal M protein antigen is effective to elicit opsonic antibodies against streptococcal infection.

Another object of the invention is to also provide a protein antigen which is effective against virulent forms of the non-virulent bacterium.

A specific object of the invention is to provide a transformed non-virulent bacteria of the genus Salmonella, specifically the typhimurium species, which carries a plasmid which encodes an M protein gene, more specifically the type 5 M protein gene.

Another object of the invention is to provide a Streptococcal M protein antigen which is effective to elicit opsonic antibodies that confer systemic immunity against streptococcal infections.

An object of this invention is to provide a multivalent Streptococcal M protein antigen which is effective to elicit opsonic antibodies against more than one serotype M Streptococcal strain.

Another object of the invention is to provide an expressed Streptococcal M protein antigen which is expressed in the cytoplasm and not expressed on the surface of the bacterium.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a Streptococcal M protein antigen which when expressed by the host, particularly a non-virulent heterologous microbial host into which the gene for the Streptococcal M protein antigen has been cloned, is an effective antigen which elicits immunity and is not serologically cross-reactive with human tissue antigens, especially those for the heart. A further object of the invention is a transformed non-virulent bacterium which is of the non-group A species of the genus Streptococcus.

Another object of this invention is a transformed host, e.g., a bacterium, particularly a non-virulent enteric bacterium, which, despite its non-virulence, will still elicit antibodies. It is an object of this invention to provide a transformed non-virulent host bacterium that will not colonize in the subject to be immunized, but will multiply to the limited extent necessary to elicit the antibodies.

An object of this invention is the transformation of Salmonella typhimurium Another object of this invention is the transformation of Streptococcus sanguis.

Another object of the invention is a transformed non-virulent host bacterium into which a heterologous nucleotide sequence of another bacterial species has been cloned, which nucleotide sequence is encoded for and expresses the protein antigen which is effective to elicit opsonic antibodies against the other bacterial species.

Another important object of the invention is to provide the nucleotide sequences carried by the gene which codes for and expresses the antigens of the other bacterial species.

Another object of the invention is to provide various other genetically engineered components leading to the transformed non-virulent host.

Another object of the invention is to clone into the host bacterium, the nucleotide sequences encoded for immunogenic polypeptides effective to elicit opsonic antibodies against Streptococcal infections, in particular for Streptococcal serotypes 5, 6 and 24.

Another object of the invention is to clone into the host bacterium, the nucleotide sequences encoded for an *E. coli* surface antigen that elicits anti-adhesive antibodies.

Another object of the invention is the genetic engineering steps which lead to the preparation of the non-virulent bacteria.

Another object of the invention is the manufacture of plasmids and other constructs necessary to clone into the *S. typhimurium* strain the heterologous nucleotide sequence that expresses the desired Streptococcal M protein antigens. An important object of the invention is the manufacture of plasmids that are stably expressed in *Aro⁻S. typhimurium* SL3261.

Another object of the invention is a method of immunization of a mammal such as a human in which there is administered to that mammal in a dosage effective to elicit opsonic antibodies and confer systemic immunity against streptococcal infections, the transformed non-virulent bacterium described above containing the heterologous nucleotide sequence. Plasmids (and vectors) are also objects of the invention.

An important object of the invention is the oral administration of the compositions of this invention, although other administrations are also provided by this invention including by parental route.

An important aspect of the invention is to provide immunity against oral infections of the streptococcal type.

Another aspect of the invention is to provide a non-virulent composition which is very well tolerated by the subject to which the composition is administered.

It is a noteworthy aspect of the invention that the immunity to the patient is systemic and is conferred comparatively rapidly and completely even when administered orally.

Other objects of the invention will become apparent from the description which follows. Other features and advantages of the invention will appear from the examples which follow and by referring to the appended drawing in which :

Fig. 1 shows Immunoblot analysis of type 5M protein expressed by pMK 207-transformed *Salmonella typhimurium* LB5000 (Lane 1) and SL3261 (Lane 2-9).

In addition to the patents and other publications mentioned above, other prior art which has been taken into consideration in the description of this invention includes :

Beachey, et al., "Repeating Covalent Structure and Protective Immunogenicity of Native and Synthetic Polypeptide Fragments of Type 24 Streptococcal M Protein," *J. Biol. Chem.*, Vol. 258, No. 21 pp 13,250 - 13,257 (1983).

van de Rijn, et al., "Group A Streptococcal Antigens Cross-Reactive with Myocardium," *J. Exp. Med.*, Vol. 146, pp. 579 - 599 (1977).

van de Rijn, et al., "Immunochemical Analysis of Intact M Protein Secreted From Cell Wall-Less Streptococci," *Infect. Immun.*, Vol. 32, pp. 86 - 91 (1981).

Edman and Begg, "A Protein Sequenator," *European J. Biochem.* Vol. 1, pp. 80 - 91 (1967).

Phillips, et al., "Streptococcal M Protein ; Helical Coiled - Coil Structure and Arrangement on the Cell Surface," *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, Vol. 78, No. 8, pp. 4689 - 4693 (August 1981).

Laver, et al., "Antigenic Drift in Type A Influenza Virus : Peptide Mapping and Antigenic Analysis of A/PR/8/34(HON1) Variants Selected With Monoclonal Antibodies," *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, Vol. 76, No. 3, pp. 1425 - 1429 (March 1979).

Atassi, "Antigenic Structure of Myoglobin : The Complete Immunochemical Anatomy of a Protein and Conclusions Relating to Antigenic Structures of Proteins," *Immunochemistry*, Vol. 12, pp. 423 - 438 (1975).

Kabat, *Structural Concepts in Immunology and Immunochemistry*, pp. 89 - 100 (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, (1968).

Nisonoff, *Methods in Immunology and Immunochemistry*, Vol. 1, pp. 120 - 187 (1977).

Munoz, *Methods in Immunology and Immunochemistry*, Vol. 3, pp. 146 - 160 (1970).

Manjula and Fischetti, "Tropomyosin-like Seven Residue Periodicity in Three Immunologically Distinct Streptococcal M Proteins and Its Implications for the Antiphagocytic Property of the Molecule," *J. Exp. Med.*, Vol. 155, pp. 695 - 708 (1980).

Beachey and Stollerman, "Toxic Effects of Streptococcal M Protein on Platelets and Polymorphonuclear Leukocytes in Human Blood," *J. Exp. Med.* Vol. 134, pp. 351 - 365 (1971).

Dale et al., "Heterogeneity of Type-Specific and Cross-Reactive Antigenic Determinants Within a Single M Protein of Group A Streptococci," *J. Exp. Med.* Vol. 155 pp. 1026 - 1038 (1980).

Beachey, et al., "Purification and Properties of M Protein Extracted from Group A Streptococci with Pepsin : Covalent Structure of the Amino Terminal Region of Type 24 M Antigen," *J. Exp. Med.* Vol. 145, pp. 1469 - 1483 (1977).

Beachey, et al., "Primary Structure of Protective Antigens of Type 24 Streptococcal M Protein," *J. Biol. Chem.*, Vol. 255, pp. 6284 - 6289 (1980).

Beachey, et al., "Repeating Covalent Structure of Streptococcal M Protein," *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* Vol. 75, pp. 3163 - 3167 (1978).

Beachey, et al., "Human Immune Response to Immunization with a Structurally Defined Polypeptide Fragment of Streptococcal M Protein" *J. Exp. Med.*, Vol. 150, pp. 862 (1979).

Brown, et al., "An Attenuated *aroA* *Salmonella typhimurium* Vaccine Elicits Humoral and Cellular Immunity to

Cloned -Galactosidase in Mice," The Journal of Infectious Diseases, Vol. 155, No. 1 (January 1987). This publication discusses salmonella typhimurium strain SL3261 and an attenuated aroA vaccine strain, which was used as a carrier for the plasmid pXY411.

This publication of Brown, et al., is incorporated herein by reference. Another publication of interest is Hoiseth and Stocker, "Aromatic-dependent Salmonella Typhimurium are Non-Virulent and Effective as Live Vaccines," Nature, Vol. 291 (May 21, 1981) ; Smith, et al., "Aromatic-Dependent Salmonella Typhimurium are Non-Virulent and Effective as Live Vaccines," Am. J. Vet. Res., Vol. 45, No. 1 (January 1984) ; Smith et al., "Vaccination of Calves Against Salmonella Dublin with Aromatic-Dependent Salmonella Typhimurium," Am. J. Vet. Res., Vol. 15, No. 11 (November 1984) ; Maskell, et al., "Attenuated Salmonella Typhimurium as Live Oral Vaccines and Carriers for Delivering Antigens to the Secretory Immune System," Vaccines 86 (Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory 1986).

Patents in the genetic engineering field which are of general interest include :

United States Patent No. 4,428,941 entitled "Nucleotide Sequence Coding the Surface of the Hepatitis B Virus, Vector Containing Said Nucleotide Sequence, Process Allowing the Obtention Thereof and Antigen Obtained Thereby," Issued to Francis Galibert, et al., on January 31, 1984; United States Patent No. 4,518,584 entitled "Human Recombinant Interleukin-2 Mutins," issued to Mark, et al., on May 21, 1985 ; United States Patent No. 4,588,585 entitled "Human Recombinant Cysteine Depleted Interferon-B Mutins," Issued to Mark, et al., on May 13, 1986 ; and United States Patent No. 4,625,252 entitled "Recombinant Bacterial Plasmids Containing the Coding Sequences of Insulin Genes," Issued to Rutter, et al., on March 24, 1987.

United States Patent No. 4,666,846 entitled "Novel Cloning Vectors Containing Selectable Genetic Markers for Use in Streptomyces and Related Organisms," issued to Fayerman, et al. on May 19, 1987 ; and United States Patent No. 4,666,847 entitled "Recombinant DNA Means and Methods," Issued to Alford, et al., on May 19, 1987.

In accordance with the invention it is preferable that the plasmid which encodes the M protein gene be cloned first and expressed in Escherichia coli. Any other enteric bacilli of the coliform group such as Klebsiella or Enterobacter can be used, but normally E. coli is preferred. Thereafter the plasmid carrying the M gene is isolated and purified and then a construct is built to transform the desired non-virulent bacteria, such as the aroA-S. typhimurium (SL3261). It is to be noted that this mutant strain exhibits a nutritional marker both for PABA and 2,3-DHB. See Brown et al., cited above. It is to be noted that another desired species of S. typhimurium is recA-S. typhimurium, particularly strain Ty21a. See Clements, et al., "Construction of a Potential Live Aro Vaccine for typhoid type fever and cholera- E. coli - related diarrheas," Infect. Immun., 46 : 564 - 9 (1984). Also see the other references cited in the above cited Brown, et al., article, which are also incorporated herein by reference.

It is preferred to obtain the M protein gene from a virulent strain of S. pyogenes. However, it is possible to obtain the gene from an attenuated, non-virulent strain of S. pyogenes, or even to fabricate the nucleotide sequence coded for the desired M protein.

The recombinant DNA cloning vectors of the present invention are not limited for use in a single species or strain of Salmonella. To the contrary, the vectors are broadly applicable and can be transformed in host cells of other gram negative bacteria such as of the Enterobacteriaceae genus (such as Shigella and Klebsiella like Klebsiella pneumoniae, Enterobacter like Enterobacter aerogenes). Salmonellae, such as Salmonella arizonae, and Citrobacter may be used if appropriately rendered non-virulent or attenuated.

Common Salmonella species which may be used when attenuated and rendered non-virulent include the following :

S. paratyphi A, S. schottmulleri, S. typhimurium, S. paratyphi C, S. choleraesuis, S. montevideo, S. newport, S. typhi, S. enteritidis, S. gallinarum, S. anatum.

In accordance with the invention there may also be used as host for the recombinant DNA cloning vectors of the present invention bacteria of the Streptococcus genus which are non-virulent or which have been made non-virulent or attenuated, including Streptococci of the immunological groups A-O but generally other than A. Suitable Streptococci which can be used as bacterial host include S. cremoris, S. faecalis, S. salivarius, S. mitis, S. mutans and S. sanguis, the latter species is presently a preferred species.

Additional appropriate microorganisms which may be attenuated and transformed in accordance with the invention are known. Reference may be made to Davis, et al., Microbiology (Harper & Row, Second Edition, 1973).

Generally any enteric bacterium may serve as the host bacterium. It is preferable that the host bacterium only survive in the subject long enough to elicit the opsonic response, but generally any bacterial strain that has been attenuated not to colonize but will still multiply to a limited degree to elicit antibodies to the foreign protein can be used. In a preferred embodiment of the invention the Aro⁻ strain of S. typhimurium is used, which requires two metabolites not found in mammalian tissues, PABA and 2,3-DHB. As a result, the inoculated bacteria die after several generations from lack of these metabolites. See Hoiseth and Stocker, cited above.

However, any mutated microbial agent with a metabolic deficiency for nutritional compounds not found in the tissues of the subject to be immunized, or one so made by genetic manipulations, may be employed.

It is to be noted that the non-virulent aro⁻ Salmonella typhimurium SL3261 into which a plasmid containing the structural gene encoding the serotype 5M protein antigen has been transformed expresses the entire M 5 protein molecule, which expression is confined almost exclusively to the S. typhimurium cytoplasmic

compartment. It is a unique and unexpected aspect of this invention that an immunogenic and protective surface antigen such as the Streptococcal M protein antigen is expressed in the cytoplasm of the non-virulent host bacterium.

Thus it can be seen that in accordance with the invention the desired nucleotide sequence which codes for an expresses the protein antigen which is effective to elicit opsonic antibodies against streptococcal infections particularly of the serotype 5, can be cloned into a variety of hosts. In a broader sense therefore the transformed host in which the nucleotide sequence is found after replication need not be heterologous with respect to the nucleotide sequence, nor does the sequence need to be heterologous with respect to the microorganisms.

In accordance with a specific embodiment of the method of immunization of a warm-blooded animal, it has been shown that a) peroral administration of up to 1.65×10^9 mutant non-virulent *Salmonella* containing the plasmid pMK207 encoding serotype 5 Streptococcal M protein was well tolerated in mice; b) plasmid pMK207 was extremely stable both *in vitro* and *in vivo*; c) the mice receiving the highest dose (10^9) of bacteria harbored the microorganisms in the liver for as long as three weeks without ill effects; d) the mice immunized orally with non-virulent transformed *Salmonella* expressing the serotype 5 Streptococcal M protein antigen gene developed opsonic serum antibodies as early as three weeks against serotype M5 Streptococci; and e) the immunized mice were completely protected at three weeks against intra-peritoneal challenges of the homologous serotype m5 (but not the heterologous serotype M24) Streptococci. It is noteworthy that no cross-reactive immunity is observed when the composition of the invention is administered orally. The cytoplasmic expression of the M protein antigen in the non-virulent bacterium is especially advantageous for this oral administration. The antigen is protected within the cytoplasm of the non-virulent bacterium from the acids of the stomach and other damaging agents until the non-virulent cell dies and releases the antigen, ordinarily in the small intestine, the preferred location for delivery of the antigens.

In accordance with the invention the non-virulent bacterium may also be used as a host for recombinant DNA cloning vectors containing nucleotide sequences which code for and express immunogenic polypeptides which are specifically effective to confer immunity against Streptococcal infections and which are not cross-reactive with human tissue antigens, especially those of the heart.

Immunogenic polypeptides in accordance with the invention include synthetic oligopeptides copying regions of M protein molecules lacking auto-immune epitopes, as described in United States Patent No. 4,284,537 issued to E. Beachey on August 18, 1981, United States Patent No. 4,454,121 issued to E. Beachey on June 12, 1984, United States Patent No. 4,521,334 issued to E. Beachey on June 4, 1985, United States Patent No. 4,597,967 issued to E. Beachey on July 1, 1986, United States Application Serial No. 739,963, to E. Beachey, et al, filed May 31, 1985, United States Application Serial No. 839,750 to E. Beachey et al filed March 14, 1986 and United States Application Serial No. 858,436 to E. Beachey et al filed May 1, 1986, all cited above and incorporated by reference.

The capacity of serotype M 24 polypeptides as a carrier for a highly multi-valent vaccine is being tested with other serotype M polypeptide fragments.

Another approach of the invention has been to use *Streptococcus sanguis* bacteria which have been transformed with the M protein - expressing plasmids. The expression of serotype type 5 M protein in *S. sanguis* has been accomplished. The M protein gene was carried on a shuttle vector plasmid and transformed into the host bacterium, which was shown to express serotype 5 M protein fibrils on the surface of the organism. Moreover, the organism were able to bind fibrinogen which in turn rendered the microorganism resistant to phagocytosis.

In accordance with the invention a desirable method for immunizing against Streptococcal infections is to instill attenuated *S. sanguis*, intranasally to evoke local immune responses at the very site where Streptococci commonly enter the host.

Another approach of the invention has been to clone into the host organism, together with the M protein - expressing plasmid, a plasmid expressing the antigen of a third bacterial species. In particular, a pSH-2 plasmid cloned from the CSH50 strain of *E. coli* has been cloned into *Sal. typhimurium* causing the host to express an *E. coli* 29 kilodalton surface antigen that elicits Fim H antiadhesive antibodies. These antiadhesive antibodies are not only effective against *E. coli* they are also effective against other gram negative bacteria.

Other advantages characteristic of the invention will appear from the non-limiting examples which follow.

EXAMPLE 1

TRANSFORMATION OF NON-VIRULENT HOST BACTERIUM TO EXPRESS STREPTOCOCCAL M PROTEIN.

The *aro⁻* strain of *Salmonella typhimurium* SL3261, developed by Stocker and Hoseith (cited above) was chosen because this mutant form a microbial agent is capable of invasion but not causing disease. This mutant strain exhibits a nutritional marker for both p-aminobenzoic acid (PABA) and 2,3-dihydrobenzoic acid (DHB). See Stocker and Hoseith, cited above.

The M5 protein antigen structural gene (smp 5) was cloned and expressed in *E. coli* LE932 as described by Kehoe, et al., "Cloning and Genetic Analysis of Serotype 5M Protein Determinant of Group A Streptococci :

Evidence for Multiple Copies of the M5 Determinant in the *Streptococcus pyogenes* Genome," *Infect Immun.*, Vol. 48, pp. 190 - 197 (1985) and Poirer, et als., "Expression of Protective and Cardiac Tissue Cross-Reactive Epitopes of Type 5 Streptococcal M Protein in *Escherichia coli*," *Infect Immun.* Vol. 48, pp. 198 - 203 (1985), both of which are incorporated herein by reference.

The plasmid pMK207 was isolated, purified, and transformed first into an *rm+* strain LB5000 of *Sal. typhimurium*, as described by Bullas and Ryo, "Salmonella typhimurium LT2 Strains which are *rm+* for all Three Chromosomally Located Systems of DNA Restriction and Modification," *J. Bacteriol.*, Vol. 156, pp. 471 - 474 (1983) and Lederberg and Cohen, "Transformation of *Salmonella typhimurium* by Plasmid Deoxyribonucleic Acid," *J. Bacteriol.*, Vol. 119, pp. 1072 - 1074 (1974), both of which are incorporated herein by reference. The plasmid isolated and purified from LB5000 was then used to transform the *aro-**Sal. typhimurium* SL3261 in using the same above-cited procedures described by Lederberg and Cohen and Bullas and Ryo.

The transformed LB5000 and SL3261 expressed the entire M5 protein molecule as demonstrated by Western blot analysis of whole cell lysates (Fig. 1 ; lanes 1 and 2). The typical triplet of M5 protein (See Poirer, et als., and Kehoe, et als., cited above) migrated as bands of M_r 59, 56 and 54k. Preliminary studies designed to determine the location of the M5 protein as expressed by *Sal. typhimurium* SL3261 indicated that the recombinant protein was confined almost exclusively to the cytoplasmic compartment. The M5 protein was expressed in a stable fashion by SL3261 even in the absence of antibiotic pressure, i.e. expression was apparent following repeated subcultures over five days, which represents approximately 35 generations of growth (Fig. 1 ; lanes 3 - 8).

EXAMPLE 2

MOUSE TOLERANCE OF TRANSFORMED *SAL. TYPHIMURIUM* SL3261

In preliminary studies, BALB/c mice were challenged with increasing doses of SL3261-pMK207 to determine whether or not the animals would tolerate the transformed organisms. None of the mice receiving up to a maximum of 1.65×10^9 organisms per oral dose either sickened or died. At 1, 3, 5 and 10 weeks after inoculation, two mice from each dosage group were sacrificed and their livers, spleens and intestines cultured for SL3261-pMK207 on McConkey's agar containing 50 mg/ml kanamycin sulfate and 10 mg/ml each of PABA and DHB. Non-lactose fermenting colonies could be isolated at one week only from the mice receiving 10^8 organisms or more, and at three weeks, only from those receiving 10^9 organisms (Table 1). No isolates were recovered after three weeks. The colonies isolated at three weeks expressed an intact M5 protein, which suggests that *smv5* was stable *in vivo* (Fig. 1 ; lane 9). The 1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 15 and 20 weeks sera from mice inoculated orally were shown to exhibit antibodies against type 5M protein and type 5 *Streptococci* by ELISA and opsonization experiments, respectively (Table 2). The saliva obtained from mice that were 20 weeks post-immunization was also shown to possess anti-M5 protein antibodies, primarily of the IgA class (Table 3).

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF SALMONELLA TYPHIMURIUM SL3261 IN
THE ORGANS OF BALB/C MICE AFTER ORAL IMMUNIZATION

| SALMONELLA DISTRIBUTION IN ORGANS ² : | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------|-------------------|--------|--------|
| INOCULATION DOSE ¹ | | INTESTINE | | | LIVER - GALL BLADDER | | | SPLEEN | | |
| Initial | Boost | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 |
| 1.7x10 ⁹ | 1.1x10 ⁹ | 2.1x10 ⁴ | <50 | <50 | 4x10 ² | 3x10 ² | <50 | 4x10 ² | <50 | <50 |
| 1.7x10 ⁸ | 1.1x10 ⁸ | <200 | <50 | ND ³ | 8x10 ² | <50 | ND | 4x10 ² | <50 | ND |
| 1.7x10 ⁷ | 1.1x10 ⁷ | <200 | <50 | ND | 1x10 ² | <50 | ND | 1x10 ² | <50 | ND |
| 1.7x10 ⁶ | 1.1x10 ⁶ | <100 | ND | ND | <50 | ND | ND | <50 | ND | ND |
| 1.7x10 ⁵ | 1.1x10 ⁵ | <100 | ND | ND | <50 | ND | ND | <50 | ND | ND |
| 1.7x10 ⁴ | 1.1x10 ⁴ | <100 | ND | ND | <50 | ND | ND | <50 | ND | ND |

1. Mice were given serially 10-fold diluted oral doses of *S. typhimurium* strain SL3261 beginning with 1.7x10⁹ colony forming units (cfu) on day 1 (initial dose), with an oral booster dose beginning with 1.1x10⁹ cfu on day 5. Each dose was suspended in 25 μ l of phosphate buffered saline (PBS, pH 7.2) containing 5 μ g ml⁻¹ kanamycin sulfate, and 1 μ g ml⁻¹ each of paraminobenzoic acid (PABA) and 2,3-dihydroxybenzoic acid (DHB). Mice were sacrificed at 1, 2, and 3 weeks after administration of the initial dose.

2. Intestine (pyloric sphincter to rectum), liver-gall bladder, and spleen were removed aseptically, placed in PBS, homogenized with a Collectorm (100 mesh; Bellco), and plated onto MacConkey agar containing 10 μ g ml⁻¹ each of PABA and DHB with or without 50 μ g ml⁻¹ of kanamycin.

3. Not determined.

TABLE 2

Opsonization of M Type 5 *S.pyogenes* with Mouse Anti-M5-Protein-Serum Obtained from BALB/c Mice Orally Immunized with *S.typhimurium* SL3261-pMK207 and their Anti-pepM Protein ELISA Titers.

| Test Serum | ELISA Titer ¹ | | | Percent Opsonization ² | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------|-----|-----------------------------------|---------|
| | IgA | IgG | IgM | Type 5 | Type 24 |
| Pre-immune | <50 | <50 | <50 | 0 | 2 |
| 1 week | 100 | 200 | <50 | 4 | 4 |
| 3 weeks | 400 | 400 | <50 | 36 | 0 |
| 5 weeks | 800 | 800 | <50 | 52 | 2 |
| 9 weeks | 100 | 1600 | 200 | 90 | 2 |
| 10 weeks | 50 | 800 | 400 | 92 | 2 |
| 15 weeks | 100 | 800 | 400 | 52 | 0 |
| 15 weeks ³ | 800 | 12800 | 800 | 82 | 0 |
| 20 weeks | <50 | 400 | 200 | 10 | 2 |
| 20 weeks ³ | 400 | 3200 | 200 | 80 | 2 |
| Anti-pepM5 ⁴ | ND ⁵ | ND | ND | 96 | 2 |
| Anti-pepM24 ⁴ | ND | ND | ND | 0 | 98 |

1. ELISA titers were determined using immobilized pepM5 reacted with BALB/c mouse anti-SL3261-pMK207-sera followed with peroxidase conjugated goat anti-mouse -IgA, -IgG, or -IgM. All mouse antisera reacted against immobilized pepM24 gave titers of <50.

2. Opsonization was determined as the percent of total neutrophils with associated streptococci.

3. Mice were boosted 48 hours prior to bleed out with 50 µg of pepM5 in 0.1 ml of phosphate buffered saline, pH 7.2.

4. Both anti-pepM5 and anti-pepM24 were prepared in rabbits to serve as positive (homologous reaction) and negative (heterologous reaction) controls.

5. The antibody titers for the rabbit anti-pepM5 or anti-pepM24 were not determined.

TABLE 3

Salivary Antibody Response¹ Against M5-Protein in BALB/c Mice Immunized Orally with *S.typhimurium* SL3261-pMK207.

| Test Serum | ELISA Titer ² Against pepM5 | |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------|
| | IgA | IgA+IgG+IgM |
| Pre-immune | <4 | <4 |
| 20 Weeks ³ | 32 | 32 |
| 20 Weeks + Boost ⁴ | 64 | 128 |

1. Saliva was collected and pooled from mice (four per group) following induction intraperitoneally with 0.1 ml of 2% pilocarpine.

2. ELISA titers were determined using immobilized pepM5 reacted with saliva (serially diluted two-fold) collected from BALB/c mice immunized with SL3261-pMK207 followed with peroxidase conjugated goat anti-mouse -IgA or an anti-mouse -IgA+IgG+IgM mixture.

3. Mice were immunized 20 weeks prior to the saliva collection (see Table 2).

4. Mice were injected with a booster dose of 50 µg of pepM5 in 0.1 ml of phosphate buffered saline, pH 7.2, 60 hours prior to saliva collection.

EXAMPLE 3

A group of mice was inoculated orally with two doses of SL3261-pMK207 and challenged 22 days after the first dose with type 5 or 24 Streptococci ; or the virulent parent *Sal. typhimurium* 1344 (Table 3). As can readily be seen by the results, the mice receiving the M5 expressing *Sal. typhimurium* mutant were completely protected against an intra-peritoneal challenge of type 5 Streptococci, but not with type 24 Streptococci. Control mice challenged intra-peritoneally with the virulent SL1344 *Sal. typhimurium* were also protected. The type 5 challenged mice were protected against a dose that exceeded the LD₅₀ by 100-fold (Table 4). This protection against parenteral challenge by type 5 Streptococci indicates that the immunity conferred is systemic.

TABLE 4

Challenge by Intra-Peritoneal Injection of M Type 5 and Type 24 Streptococci or *S.typhimurium* SL1344 in BALB/c Mice Immunized Orally¹ with Live *aro*⁻ *S.typhimurium* Transformed with pMK207 Expressing Type 5 M Protein.

| Challenge Organisms ² | Dose ³ | Survival ^{4,5} | |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| | | Unimmunized | Immunized |
| M5 Streptococci (Smith strain) | 1.7x10 ⁴ | 2/4 | 4/5 |
| | 1.7x10 ⁵ | 0/4 | 5/5 |
| | 1.7x10 ⁶ | 0/4 | 5/5 |
| M24 Streptococci (Vaughn strain) | 1.6x10 ³ | 1/3 | 1/3 |
| | 1.6x10 ⁴ | 0/3 | 0/3 |
| | 1.6x10 ⁵ | 0/3 | 0/3 |
| <i>S.typhimurium</i> (Strain SL1344) | 7.3x10 ¹ | 0/3 | 3/3 |
| | 7.3x10 ² | 0/3 | 3/3 |
| | 7.3x10 ³ | 0/3 | 3/3 |

1. Each immunized mouse received 1.2×10^9 pMK207-transformed SL3261 *S.typhimurium* colony forming units (cfu) at 22 days and 1.6×10^9 cfu at 17 days before challenged. Each dose was administered orally suspended in 25 μ l of phosphate buffered saline containing 5 μ g ml⁻¹ kanamycin sulfate, and 1 μ g ml⁻¹ each of paraminobenzoic acid and 2,3 - dihydroxybenzoic acid.

2. The LD₅₀ for M5 and M24 streptococci and SL1344 in BALB/c mice was approximately 2×10^4 , 2×10^3 , and 1×10^0 CFU, respectively.

3. Dose was determined as the CFU administered.

4. Survival was recorded as the number of surviving mice divided by the number of mice challenged.

5. All recorded deaths occurred between 3 and 6 days after challenge. All surviving mice appeared healthy up to 30 days after challenge.

A group of BALB/c mice which had been immunized orally with SL3261-pMK207 were challenged intra-nasally with type 5 or 24 Streptococci, or the virulent parent *Sal. typhimurium* SL1344. As can be seen in Table 5, only those mice immunized orally with SL3261-pMK207 were able to survive an intra-nasal challenge with a dosage of homologous organisms which was otherwise sufficient to kill all immunized animals. Further, the protection conferred by *Sal. typhimurium* SL3261 expressing recombinant M5 protein is M type specific as demonstrated by the inability of intra-nasally challenged mice to tolerate M type 24 Streptococci. The fact that mice were refractory to challenge by intra-nasal inoculation suggested that oral immunization with M5 protein expressing *Sal. typhimurium* SL3261 was sufficient to impart local immunity.

TABLE 5

Challenge by Intra-Nasal Inoculation of M Type 5 and Type 24 Streptococci or *S. typhimurium* SL1344 in BALB/c Mice Immunized Orally¹ with Live *aro*⁻ *S. typhimurium* Transformed with pMK207 Expressing Type 5 M Protein.

| Challenge Organisms ² | Dose ³ | Survival ^{4,5} | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| | | Unimmunized | Immunized |
| M5 Streptococci (Smith strain) | 3.9×10^7 | 0/4 | 6/6 |
| M24 Streptococci (Vaughn strain) | 3.5×10^7 | 0/4 | 0/6 |
| <i>S. typhimurium</i> (Strain SL1344) | 4.3×10^4 | 0/4 | 6/6 |

1. Each immunized mouse received 1.2×10^9 pMK207 transformed SL3261 *S. typhimurium* colony forming units (cfu) at day 1 and 1.6×10^9 cfu at day 5. Each dose was administered orally suspended in 25 μ l of phosphate buffered saline (PBS, pH 7.2) containing 5 μ g ml⁻¹ kanamycin sulfate, and 1 μ g ml⁻¹ each of paraminobenzoic acid and 2,3-dihydroxybenzoic acid.

2. Challenge dose was determined as the cfu administered intra-nasally in 20 μ l of PBS (10 μ l per nostril).

3. Mice were challenged 13 weeks after the initial immunization (ie. day 1).

4. Survival was recorded as the number of surviving mice over the number of mice challenged.

5. Deaths from streptococci occurred between 2 and 4 days, while deaths due to salmonella occurred between 5 and 7 days after challenge. All surviving mice appeared healthy up to 30 days after challenge.

The above examples are not to be construed as limitations, but are merely illustrative of the invention. The invention also encompasses combinations of any number of immunogenic polypeptide sequences of any Streptococcal serotype M protein antigen in a covalent linkage to a natural or synthetic carrier to create a multivalent vaccine broadly protective against serotype M Streptococcus.

The invention also encompasses utilizing an M protein polypeptide sequence as the carrier to which the other sequences are covalently linked, evoking an opsonic response to each one of the Streptococcal serotypes, the polypeptides of which are linked to the carrier, as well as the Streptococcal serotype, the polypeptide of which is serving as the carrier.

The invention also encompasses encoding a nucleotide sequence for such a multivalent polypeptide onto an *S. pyogenes* chromosome in the region of the M protein structural gene, cloning it into plasmids and transforming the plasmids into non-virulent host bacterium. Synthetic nucleotide sequences are preferred, but nucleotide sequences obtained from living bacterial cells may also be employed. The invention also encompasses cloning into non-virulent host bacterium already transformed to express immunogenic polypeptides eliciting opsonic responses to type M Streptococcal infections genetic material for the expression of immunogenic polypeptides eliciting opsonic responses to other virulent bacteria species and the covalent linkage of both species polypeptides. The invention also encompasses the resultant attenuated non-virulent host organism, orally administrable as a broad-spectrum vaccine capable of eliciting opsonic responses to more than one species of bacteria.

One skilled in the art would have no difficulty in developing various variations in procedure and products which are within the spirit of the invention and scope of the claims or their equivalent.

Claims

1.- A transformed non-virulent bacterium which contains a heterologous nucleotide sequence, which nucleotide sequence is encoded for an expresses a Streptococcal M protein antigen.

2.- The transformed heterologous nucleotide sequence containing non-virulent bacterium of claim 1 wherein the expressed Streptococcal M protein antigen is effective to elicit opsonic antibodies against Streptococcal infections.

3.- The transformed heterologous nucleotide sequence containing non-virulent bacterium of claim 2 wherein the expressed Streptococcal M protein antigen is effective to elicit opsonic antibodies and confer immunity against the type 5 Streptococci.

4.- The transformed heterologous nucleotide sequence containing non-virulent bacterium of claim 3 wherein the type 5 Streptococcal specific immunity conferred by the opsonic antibodies elicited by the expressed type 5 M protein antigen is systemic.

5.- The transformed non-virulent heterologous nucleotide sequence containing bacteria of claim 2 which also expresses a protein antigen effective to elicit opsonic antibodies against the virulent form of the non-virulent bacterium.

6.- The transformed heterologous nucleotide sequence containing non-virulent bacterium of claim 2 wherein the heterologous nucleotide sequence is from bacteria of the genus *Streptococcus*.

7.- The transformed heterologous nucleotide sequence containing non-virulent bacterium of claim 6 wherein the heterologous nucleotide sequence is from a virulent strain of Streptococci.

8.- The transformed heterologous nucleotide sequence containing non-virulent bacterium of claim 2 wherein the non-virulent bacterium genus is *Salmonella*.

9.- The transformed heterologous nucleotide sequence containing non-virulent bacterium of claim 8 wherein the non-virulent *Salmonella* is *Salmonella typhimurium*.

10.- The transformed heterologous nucleotide sequence containing non-virulent bacterium of claim 9 wherein *Salmonella typhimurium* strain is Aro-Sal, typhimurium, SL3261.

11.- The transformed heterologous nucleotide sequence containing bacterium of claim 2 wherein the non-virulent bacterium is of the group consisting of all non-group A species of the genus *Streptococcus*.

12.- The transformed heterologous nucleotide sequence containing bacteria of claim 11 wherein the non-virulent non-group *Streptococcus* bacteria is *Streptococcus sanguis*.

13.- The transformed heterologous nucleotide sequence containing non-virulent bacterium of claim 2 wherein the heterologous nucleotide sequence is contained in a plasmid.

14.- The transformed heterologous nucleotide sequence containing non-virulent bacterium of claim 1, wherein the non-virulent bacterium are of a virulent strain capable of invasion, but are a mutant strain incapable of causing disease.

15.- The transformed heterologous nucleotide sequence containing mutant non-virulent bacterium of claim 14, which exhibits a nutritional marker for metabolites not found in the tissues of the subject to be immunized.

16.- A therapeutic composition which comprises in a amount effective to elicit opsonic antibodies and to confer immunity against streptococcal infections the transformed non-virulent heterologous nucleotide sequence containing bacterium of claim 1.

17.- A method for immunization of a mammal which comprises administering to said mammal in a dosage effective to elicit opsonic antibodies and confer immunity against streptococcal infections, the composition of claim 16.

18.- The method of claim 17 wherein the administration to the mammal is oral.

19.- An amino acid sequence of a Streptococcal M protein antigen which sequence evokes protective immunity in a mammal susceptible to type M Streptococcal infection of the specific serotype *Streptococcus* producing said antigen, which sequence is not serologically cross-reactive with the heart tissue antigens of said immunized mammal.

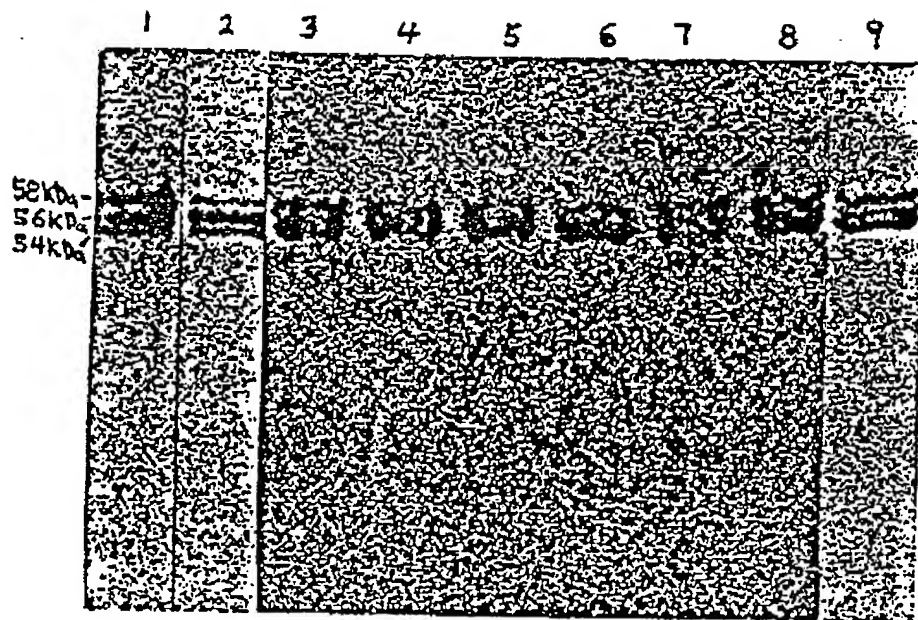


FIGURE 1



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| DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT | | | EP 88402132.0 |
|---|---|--|--|
| Category | Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages | Relevant to claim | CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 4) |
| X | WO - A1 - 85/00 832 (THE ROCKE-FELLER UNIVERSITY) * Claims 1-6, 8, 9, 14, 16-18, 23, 32, 34, 46 * | 1-7, 11, 13, 16 | C 12 N 15/00 C 12 N 1/20 A 61 K 39/09 |
| | -- | | |
| D, X | US - A - 4 597 967 (BEACHEY) * Claims 6, 7 * | 16, 19 | (C 12 N 1/20 C 12 R 1:46) (C 12 N 1/20 C 12 R 1:42) |
| | -- | | |
| D, X | NATURE, vol. 292, no. 5822, July 30, 1981 (New York, London) E.H.BEACHEY et al. "Type-specific protective immunity evoked by synthetic peptide of Streptococcus pyogenes M protein" pages 457-459 * Totality * | 16, 19 | |
| | ---- | | |
| | | | TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. 4) |
| | | | C 12 N A 61 K |
| INCOMPLETE SEARCH | | | |
| <p>The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the provisions of the European Patent Convention to such an extent that it is not possible to carry out a meaningful search into the state of the art on the basis of some of the claims.</p> <p>Claims searched completely: 1-16, 19 Claims searched incompletely: - Claims not searched: 17, 18 Reason for the limitation of the search:</p> <p>(Article 52(4) EPC)</p> | | | |
| Place of search VIENNA | | Date of completion of the search 23-11-1988 | Examiner WOLF |
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